

**Biodiversity Conservation & Economic Growth
(BCEG) Project**

QUARTERLY REPORT

May-July, 2001

Submitted by:

Peter Hetz

Team Leader and Chief of Party

ARD, Inc.

Bulgaria Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project

is a collaborative initiative between the

United States Agency for International Development

and the

Government of the Republic of Bulgaria

implemented by

Associates in Rural Development, Inc.

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Acronyms

ARD	Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
BCEG	Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project
BSBCP	Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Program
BTA	Bulgarian Telegraph Agency
CBNP	Central Balkan National Park
CHM	Clearing House Mechanism
COM	Council of Ministers
CPT	Core Planning Team
CRP	Contract Results Package
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FLAG	Firm Level Assistance Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility (note the acronym “GEF” is also generically in Bulgaria for the USAID/GEF Biodiversity project)
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
GWU	George Washington University
HEC	Higher Expert Council
HQ	Headquarters
IQC	Indefinite Quantities Contract
IT	Information Technology
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MIS	Management Information System
MOAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Management Plan
MSI	Management Systems International
MTA	Master of Tourism Administration
NEPF	National Environmental Protection Fund
NET	National Eco-Trust

NFMTF	National-level Financial Mechanisms Task Force
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	National Nature Protection Service (of MOEW)
NP	National Park
NTNR	Non-Timber Natural Resources
PA	Protected Area(s)
PAA	Protected Area Act
PC3	Public Computer and Communications Center
PMU	Project Management Unit
PR	Public Relations
REA	Rapid Ecological Assessment
REC	Regional Environmental Center
RFP	Request for Proposal
RM	Rila Monastery
RNP	Rila National Park
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIS	United States Information Service

Preface

The Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth (BCEG) Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), as part of its strategic support to the Republic of Bulgaria. The Project is sponsored by USAID in conjunction with the Government of Bulgaria – the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW). The Project is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments, and its implementation covers the period: May 2000 – October 2002.

This Project is a logical evolution of earlier USAID assistance to biodiversity conservation in the country. It follows some 10 years of assessment, technical assistance and financing of Bulgaria's biodiversity conservation strategic development, new protected areas legislation, and new national park institutions. The Project is designed to capitalize on the achievements of the Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Biodiversity Project (implemented during the period June 1995-April 2000), and builds on lessons learned.

The BCEG Project addresses six specific contract themes known as “contract result packages”. The BCEG Project includes the finalization and implementation of two national park management plans, the development of a new management plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park. It assists in the development of financial mechanisms and strategies to ensure the solvency of national parks. The Project pilots economic growth activities with select target groups around two Bulgarian national parks. And it continues to build on the principles of strong public information and awareness as stepping stones for informed public engagement and promotion of biodiversity conservation and protected area management activities.

This Project is issued as a Task Order (Contract Number LAG-I-00-99-00013-00) under the USAID Global Biodiversity and Forestry Indefinite Quantities Contract (IQC); and is implemented on behalf of USAID by Associates in Rural Development, (ARD) Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, USA.

The Project is implemented through a Project Management Unit (PMU) based in Sofia, and includes a Team Leader, three Bulgarian technical specialists, and support staff. Project activities are coordinated through two mechanisms –

- (a) Project Counterpart Team – PMU staff and MOEW/NNPS counterparts
- (b) Project Coordination Group – that serves as a steering committee for Project planning and monitors implementation. This consists of the National Nature Protection Service of the MOEW, and national park directors, the PMU and USAID.

The Project is largely implemented through the Directorates for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks. Additional technical assistance is provided by Bulgarian and international consultants, and is based on specific terms of reference.

1.0 Introduction

BCEG Project activities are guided by a life of project work plan, implemented through an annual work plan. Reports regarding progress are required quarterly. At the time of submitting this quarterly report, the BCEG Annual Work Plan for May 2001 through April 2002, was not yet approved by USAID.

USAID manages this contract using two mechanisms – a project officer or Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) based in Washington D.C., and through the USAID Bulgaria's Environment and Natural Resources Specialist, attached to the Mission's program unit. The Project remains one of USAID Bulgaria's "Special Initiatives and Cross-cutting Programs".

This quarterly report covers the three-month period, **May – July, 2001**.

This reporting period is characterized by:

- Final review and approval of the National Park Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks, by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers (June 28, 2001)
- National Elections (July 17, 2001) and the appointment of a national new administration.
- Press Conference, launch workshop and stakeholder consultations for the Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan;
- Final gap analysis and start-up of the Rapid Ecological and Social/Tourism Assessments for the Monastery Nature Park.
- International consultation and George Washington University Technical Team in Ecotourism, led by Ecotourism specialist, Professor Donald Hawkins;
- International consultation in natural resource policy and economics, Dr. Steve Dennison.

The Work Plan and Quarterly report format continues to reflect six contract results packages (CRP) – or distinct project themes. These include:

<i>Contract Result Package 1</i>	Finalize Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks, and deliver to the Council of Ministers
<i>Contract Result Package 2</i>	Effective Management and Priority Actions of Management Plans Supported
<i>Contract Result Package 3</i>	Park-related eco-enterprises demonstrated for ecotourism and natural, non-timber resources collection
<i>Contract Result Package 4</i>	Mechanism for National Park Financial Sustainability Established
<i>Contract Result Package 5</i>	Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan Prepared
<i>Contract Result Package 6</i>	Public Awareness and Promotion Campaigns Implemented

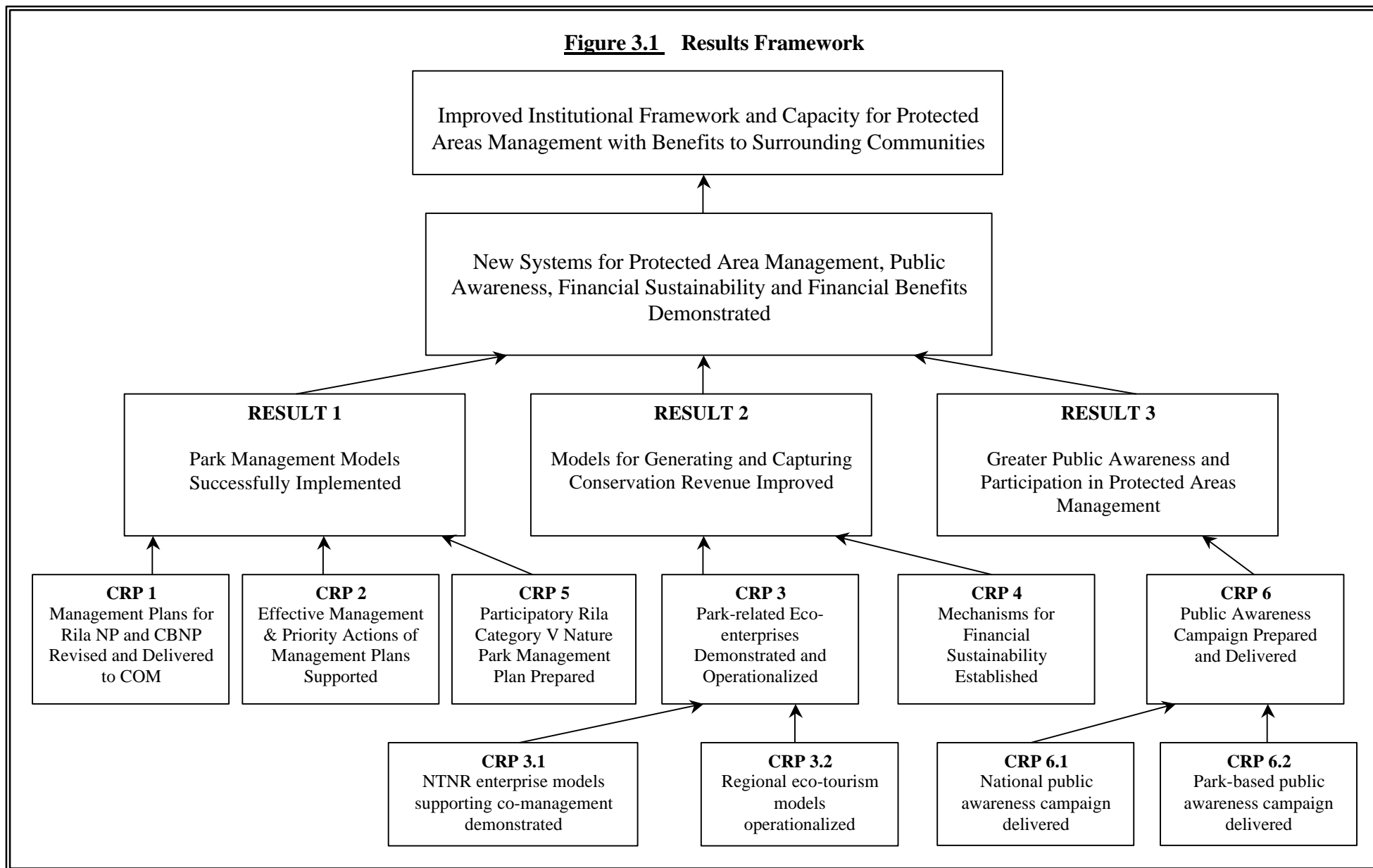
Additional planning and reporting themes include: Project management and Administration, Networking and Partnerships, and Special Project Issues.

2.0 Results Framework

The aim of the Project is to contribute to the improved institutional framework and capacity for protected areas management in Bulgaria with benefits to communities surrounding key protected area sites. A secondary objective is to demonstrate new systems for protected areas management, public awareness, financial sustainability and financial benefits. In order to achieve this hierarchy of objectives, the Project supports three direct results, or outcomes:

- Park management models are successfully implemented
- Models for generating and capturing biodiversity conservation revenue are improved; and,
- Greater public awareness and participation is demonstrated in protected areas management

Project reporting is guided by the six results packages. Each quarterly reports uses the six results packages to report on a set of activities covered by the reporting period, quantifies results/activities, and identifies constraints to achievement of project targets. Finally, each result package includes recommendations for actions or amendments to work plan implementation that will guide activities during the following quarter, and/or life of project activities.

Figure 3.1 Results Framework

3.0 Planned Activities

Result 1 Park Management Models Successfully Implemented

This result is supported by three (3) contract results packages (sets of activities). These include:

[illegible]

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-October			Nov-Jan 2002			Feb-April		
	GIS data base management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating borders Normalization of new Agroles data Unification of object classes Management zone cadaster completed GPS training GIS management training 		x	x	x	x	x	x					
			x		x	x	x	x					
					x	x			x				
					x	x				x			
	Ranger Training						x	x				x	
	Administrative Training						x				x		
	Proposal Development Training							x	x				
	NEW ENV. LEGISLATION – ORIENTATION AND T.A.						x	x		?	?		
5	Rila Mpnastery Nature Park Management Plan Preparation and Launch Activities		x										
	Rapid Assessment Exercises		x	x	x								
	Data Processing and analysis					x							
	Management Planning workshops						x	x	x	x			
	GIS Development							x	x			x	x
	Plan Writing										x	x	x
	Public Awareness												
	Preface		x										
	Phase 1			x			x	x					
	Phase 2								x	x			
	Phase 3												x

CRP 1 Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks revised and delivered to Council of Ministers for approval.

The final stages in the approval process of the 10-year management plans were completed during this quarter.

1. Higher Expert Council Meeting Members of the MOEW's Higher Expert Council met on May 30, 2001 to offer their formal judgement and recommendations on the content of the management plans.

The Management Plans were accepted without any major recommendations, and only minor editorial comments. Appropriate corrections to the text were noted by the HEC secretariat, and forwarded to ARD/BCEG PMU, for inclusion in a final draft version.

2. Management Plans edited and reproduced for review by all Ministries, as well as regional and district authorities.

3. Management Plans reviewed by the administrative and legal sections of all Ministries to ensure their compliance with relevant legislation and technical policy matters.

4. **Council of Ministers meeting - June 28, 2001**, to approve the final versions of the 10-year Management Plans for both National Parks. Plans are approved by the COM unanimously. There are only two instructions for inclusion in the final versions of the Management Plans. Both are considered advantageous to the future management of these protected areas:

- a) The National Institute of Monuments of Culture requires a program and supporting projects to be included for historic and cultural sites to be researched, further protected and interpreted for the benefit of the nation, and the public.
- b) The “Investments and Concessions” Department of the Council of Ministers, requires all property and infrastructure located within the National Parks to become state/public property. They require concessions to be used to support future operation and management of these areas. The required changes will impact future park management options. Instructions include an assessment and implementation of a concessions policy and package for national parks.

The latter recommendation and its inclusion to the Management Plans have a direct and beneficial impact on the ability of Parks to manage property and generate income from concessions. This reflects positively on the Project’s repeated efforts to improve upon the inclusion of financial mechanisms in the management plans.

5. **Management Plans signed by the Minister of the MOEW**, on July 4, 2001.

6. **Management Plans published in the State Gazette** on July, 27, 2001, indicating that both Management Plans now form official, legal documents of the State of Bulgaria.

Official documents are now approved for reproduction and publication. Toward this end, the BCEG Project PMU has initiated commercial reproduction of the documents.

- 40 copies of the Management Plan will be reproduced in the Bulgarian language for each National Park. These will be distributed to National Park Directorates, NNPS, Park section Heads, and other relevant state authorities;
- 20 copies of the Management Plans will be reproduced for each park, in the English language for USAID, and international distribution, by the MOEW. Final English language translation will be completed in the next quarter, and reproduction before the end of 2001.
- 70 copies, of each Park’s Management Plan Summaries (prescriptive sections) – will be published. They will be distributed by the Park Directorates to local/regional stakeholders.

A local printing purchase order is used to procure reproduction services.

White Brotherhood (Universal Fellowship of Light) – followers of Peter Dunov

The only significant controversy encountered during the public review and scrutiny of the Rila National Park Management Plan, was the international appeal of the “Dunovists” to remove any limits to the numbers of people allowed to collect at the 7 Rila Lakes area. The Dunovist’s gather at this site at various times over the last 80 years, in association with activities started by the movement’s spiritual leader – Peter Dunov. The 7 Rila Lakes are believed to have super-natural powers.

Within recent years, the numbers of followers and observers have had significant impacts on the natural environment surrounding the 7 Rila Lakes, particularly the lakeshore vegetation, and glacial lake waters. While these impacts have not yet been quantified by the new Park management, discussions conducted during the preparation of the management plan, between the Park and Dunovist representatives, led to negotiated limits of use during the height of summer devotions. Unfortunately, these limits were challenged by other Dunovists at national and international levels.

The MOEW, with the assistance of the BCEG Project, assembled a Task Force in response to the Dunovists' appeal. The task force was able to successfully address the Dunovists' concerns. The Rila National Park has since met with the national leadership of the Dunovists to agree the terms of this summer's gathering of Dunov followers, with a view towards establishing limits of acceptable use. The Park management and Dunovist's will aim to develop a program of reduced impacts, a reduction in numbers of people using the 7 Lakes area, and monitoring program. A 'protocol' between the two parties guides this summer's activities, and will be monitored by a joint site management team.

Work Plan Implications *None*

CRP 2 Effective Management and Priority Actions of Management Plans Supported

Approval of the National Park management plans for Central Balkan and Rila signal a program of capital investment and training. Activities are related to three-year action plans in each Park, and to annual operations plans as supplied to the NNPS, MOEW. Both national park directorates are responsible for developing and managing these activities. In keeping with the Annual Work Plan, BCEG Project support is provided in support of:

2.1 Capital Investment Projects

The BCEG Project and National Park Directorates have developed and agreed a proposal format and procedure for seeking BCEG Project financing. The Project budget used to support national park activities and training are agreed with the NNPS on an annual basis. This process is aimed at developing Park management confidence in implementing management plans, and in creating a strong sense of accountability with both fiscal and activity management by different level of park staff. National Park Directors supervise and monitor all park activities and investments.

Tourism, Interpretation, and Education

The "Concept for the Graphic and Visual Presentation of the Identity of Bulgarian National Parks" (Developed by the GEF Project), serves as the master-plan for the development of infrastructure and graphic styles of the new national parks.

The BCEG Project has supported each National Park/NNPS with the development of design and tender documents for construction of infrastructure related to tourism, interpretation, education, and visitor management.

Construction documents were competed based on design and tender document prepared and supplied with both parks earlier in the BCEG Project implementation (December 2000).

Priority for the design and construction of visitors' infrastructure was given to the eco tourism pilot areas of Kalofer, Central Balkan National Park; and for Samokov, Rila National Park.

The BCEG Project supports the professional design and construction tender documents production through a purchase order. The tender for construction is competed by the National Park Directorate, and a contractor recommended to the BCEG Project for a construction contract. Contracts are issued in favor of each Park-selected contractor. Contracts are secured through a Project purchase order. Professional supervision and construction quality assurance are the responsibility of each Park, in conjunction with the BCEG Project supported designer and engineer.

Local contractors and local labor are selected by each Park, as part of their emphasis on providing local benefits to communities surrounding each Park.

For ***Rila National Park***, the following four tourism and visitor management projects are being implemented:

- **Development and construction of visitor entrances** in Rila National Park – entrances of the park. The projects include 64 sites – main, secondary or third level entrances.
Development and construction of visitor facilities in Rila National Park – picnic sites. The project includes 25 picnic areas. All these include interpretation and information boards and signs, tables and benches, etc.
- **Interpretation and Education** in Rila NP. The project includes development of the interpretation plan for the ecotourism pilot area, design of the infrastructure and its construction and installation. Three sites will be equipped with the relevant infrastructure and graphics. During this quarter, the interpretation plan and the design were realized.
- **Rila National Park Visitors Management** includes the graphic design of the rules of behavior in the park, and production of signs and their installation. It also includes the design and production of information boards for the chalets and marking of the reserves boundaries. The project was approved during this Project period, To date, only the graphic design has started.

Additional Rila National Park Projects include:

Education Materials for Rila National Park – a seven-part set of educational materials related to seven major natural history themes for Rila National Park.

Central Balkan National Park is implementing the following tourism and visitor management projects:

- **Visitors and interpretation infrastructure for the Ecotourism pilot area- Kalofer** – 3 viewpoints, 3 entrances of the park, 3 picnic areas, 8 entrances to the reserves. The design work was finalized during this reporting period. Competitive contracting procedures are now taking place.
- **Development and construction of elements of the visitor infrastructure and management facilities** in other priority sections of the park – 17 view points, 11 picnic

areas, 8 water taps, 32 reserve entrances, 2 walking bridges. The implementation of this project will start later this year and will finish during the next summer season.

- **Marking of the reserves boundaries.** Design and production of the reserved markers and paint to mark the boundaries of the reserves. The project is presently being implemented.

Additional project activities approved for implementation:

Central Balkan National Park - **Archeological Studies.** The project contributes to the improvement of the visitor services of the park, and is a priority in complying with the Council of Minister Order, especially for this National Park. The project covers the expenses of archeological expedition, the results of which will be included in the interpretation plan of the park. The project is being implemented. A mid-term report indicates new discoveries, the significance of which will be provided in a summary report.

A comprehensive list of NNPS and BCEG Project approved project concepts is attached as Appendix 1. Each project is supported by a full project proposal and EIA scrutiny, before funding. Proposal format and procedures are also included in Appendix 1.

2.2 Training

The only Park training event that has taken place this quarter is related to the Pilot program for Non-timber natural resources. The blueberry resource assessment activities in each park will include a week of specific training and application for park staff, and pilot area collectors.

The remainder of the Park training events will be take place during the second, third, and fourth quarters, when field staff and directorates are less busy. Summer is a particularly busy time of year for all park staff, as it is the only time that the mountains are most readily accessible.

GIS Needs Assessment – the final draft report was refined and completed during this quarter. It will serve to guide further GIS training for both parks, as well as the use of GPS as tools in park management and ecological monitoring.

Work Plan Implications *None*

Six major activities in support of the management planning process were completed during this reporting period.

1. **Formation and orientation of Core Planning Team completed.** CPT members finalized their TOR review, participated in development of the planning launch workshop, and began their information collection assignments.
2. **Rapid Ecological Assessment Workshop** – May 23-25. With the assistance of natural resources policy expert, Dr. Steve Dennison, the country's first rapid ecological assessment workshop was conducted in support of a rapid assessment of the specific conservation significance of the territory surrounding the Rila Monastery. 23 participants from the NNPS, RM Nature Park Directorate, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, Wilderness Fund, and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, participated in an interdisciplinary selection of the methods and roles for an intensive period of summer information collection. The result is a cost-efficient assessment plan for the Park territory that has not been reviewed or assessed for conservation and economic value during the preparation of the Rila National Park Management Plan. The most significant gaps that this information collection exercise fills is that related to investment options associated with the Monastery's private land ownership of the territory, and its conservation value.
3. **Press conference** - The Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Planning effort was officially launched during this reporting period. A Press conference at the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, on June 11, signaled the start of this management planning exercise. The Conference resulted in 12 articles published in the central press, and three TV and radio reports. The Press conference was preceded by a press release and press kit for the event.
4. **Launch Workshop** – A stakeholders workshop was conducted on June 27, with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, National Forestry Board, at the MOAF premises. The Workshop was officially opened by the MOAF representative and USAID (Jay Lee). The workshop served to orient 25 organizations and their representatives to the management plan content, process, role of ARD/BCEG, and the Core Planning Team.
5. **Rapid Ecological Field Team** – an interdisciplinary team of 18 scientists from a variety of national institutions and the nature park directorate participated in the REA effort. This is the first known assessment of ecological and conservation values conducted by an interdisciplinary team in Bulgaria. Information is collected using three, primary tools – Global Positioning System hand held units, concurrent assessment of habitats and vegetation units by both zoologists and botanists, and a rigorous use of field forms that are filled and reviewed each day by the team. Two field sessions were completed during this time – June 28- July 8, inclusive of two days of GPS training, and July 23-August 1. The final REA is expected between August 20 and 27. These two REA's are being complemented by two rapid medicinal plants assessments, in compliance with requirements of the Medicinal Plants Act. These two exercises will employ an additional 10 days of effort.
6. **Stakeholder Consultations** – Every stakeholder who attended the launch workshop received a follow-up visit expressly for the purposes of reviewing expectations, gaps in information, and Planning Team participation criteria. Stakeholder consultations were completed between July 6 and July 18. Visits included organizations and agencies in Sofia, the regional administrative governments in Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad, and the

municipalities and government representatives in Kocharinovo, Rila, Pastra and Padala. The Project's Team Leader, Public Information and Education Specialist, and the CPT - Socio-Economic expert, attended the meetings. 20 Stakeholders are expected to eventually form the Nature Park planning team.

A part-time translator and administrative assistant was hired to assist with the organization, operations, and administrative responsibilities associated with all CPT activities. She is based at the PMU, and operates under their supervision.

Public Awareness – In addition to the press conference and stakeholder meetings, the CPT (assisted by the Project's Public Awareness specialist) developed a set of informational post cards in support of the management planning effort. These postcards will be used as both incentive and public information tools during the socio-economic information collection exercises conducted in August and early September. The idea was selected by the team after reviewing of a number of North American public information and awareness building tools, linking mementos of nature conservation with practical information on natural resource conservation issues.

Planning has started on the design and content of a booklet highlighting the conservation, historical, cultural and natural values of the territory. The booklet will be compiled using information summarized from this summer's field work and information collection.

Work Plan Implications Work plan targets are on track. Field work write-up and summarization will take place during September. Early October will host the *Analysis of Field Results Workshop* with the REA Group.

The first Management Planning Team Workshop is expected in late October.

Result 2 Models for generating and capturing biodiversity conservation revenue are improved

This result is supported by two contract results packages:

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-Oct			Nov –Jan 2002			Feb-April		
3a	NTNR												
	Phase 1 (complete)												
	Phase 2												
	▪ Rapid rural assessment (complete)												
	▪ Situation analysis Survey (complete)												
	▪ Survey analysis and report	x	x										
	Phase 3												
	▪ Local NTNR action plan for each pilot area			x	x								
	Phase 4												
	▪ Collector Training				x	x	x						
	▪ Community Education				x	x							
	▪ Resource Monitoring Prog					x	x	x					
	▪ Capitalization identified				x			x					
	▪ Enterprises Identified and Assisted				x								
	▪ Identify market opportunities							x	x	x			
	▪ New Harvest Season Action Plans developed										x	x	x
3b	Ecotourism												
	Phase 1 (complete)												
	Phase 2 (complete)												
	Phase 3 – Models												
	▪ Action Planning	x	x										
	▪ Baseline data collection	x	x	x									
	▪ Publicity and information development		x	x	x								
	▪ Product Development		x	x									
	Phase 4												
	▪ Market Studies (regional)				x	x							
	▪ Product Implementation				x	x	x						
	Phase 5												
	▪ Business Planning					x	x	x					
	▪ Business Financing							x	x				
	Training								x	x	x	x	
	Park Tourism Cluster Meetings					x			x			x	

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-Oct			Nov-Jan 2002			Feb-April		
4	Innovative Financing												
	Concept paper for NFMF concept			x									
	Appoint NFMF and launch meeting				x								
	Requests for Proposals design (venture capital fund)						x						
	Selection of award(s)								x				
	Concession Policy review complete										x		
	Permit system review complete												
	AOPs and funding proposals from CBNP and Rila reviewed and endorsed as necessary.										x	x	
	Completion of recommendation on NEPF and NET												x
	Task Force Meetings				x				x		x		

CRP 3 Park-related eco-enterprises demonstrated for ecotourism and natural, non-timber resources collection

CRP 3a Non-timber natural resources

Working teams of National Park staff attached to the pilot areas have been operational during this reporting period. At least two Park staff are concentrating on a regular basis on activities in their respective pilot regions. The teams are coordinated and supervised by the PMU eco-enterprise specialist and intermittent NTNR specialist, Chavdar Gusev.

The National Working Group is also functioning on a regular basis. **Three meetings of the National working** group were conducted: (a) to discuss the approaches of the pilot projects, (b) to set up the objectives of the situation analysis, and (c) to review the results of the situation analysis and plan the natural resource assessment for the natural resource from the Park with the highest commercial demand.

The three months reporting period was devoted mainly to an in-depth **situation analysis**. The situation analysis consists of three distinct aspects:

- (a) a local assessment of social, economic, and supply chain issues;
- (b) design and implementation of a non-timber natural resource assessment of blueberry productivity and distribution within the Park;
- (c) an assessment of the best mechanisms (including opportunities for the development of small and medium enterprises) to be employed by Parks in support of improved resource management AND local economic benefits.

Blueberries (1). *vaccinium myrtillus* (black-blueberry - this one is most widespread and populous. (2) *v. vitis-idaea* (red blueberry), and (3) *v. uliginosum* (blue-blueberry) were selected as the non-timber resource that would be used to develop a NTNR management

model. *Vaccinium sp.* Associated with high mountain massifs are found almost exclusively within the national park boundaries, and approximately 70% of the national yield is found within the national park system (the remainder coming from the Rhodopes mountains).

Gusev and Georgieva assisted the pilot area teams with the development of a suitable information collection tools and methodology. They also provided the review and secondary analysis of the existing information about the natural resource and the socio-economic specifics of the regions. The local experts and parks representatives conducted the interviews and collected the information on the local level.

A process of orientation and negotiations with different NTNR “players” accompanied the situation analysis. During the period of May – July the BCEG team conducted **four field trips to each of the pilot areas, and a situation analysis orientation and training session.** In each pilot area **about 20 stakeholders** were identified, approached and interviewed.

A “blueberry” resource assessment was designed during this reporting period. The tools and methodology were developed, interdisciplinary teams were identified, and the field work commenced in early August. The teams are assembled and supervised by the Project’s biodiversity specialist and included the NTNR specialist (Gusev), experts from the Bulgarian Academy of Science/Institute of Botany, National parks section heads and experts, park rangers and representatives of the local collectors groups. This demonstrates one of the features of the collaborative management approach.

This resource assessment exercise is the basis for future development of a specific set of management tools for other NTNRs. It also forms one of the cornerstones of each National Parks ecological monitoring program.

The final element of the situation analysis will be completed with the assistance of an Enterprise Development Specialist (international consultant) in early August. He will review the opportunities and costs of different mechanisms for non-timber natural resource management AND local, economic growth for communities. Particular attention will be given to the role and opportunity for Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs).

A final report – a comprehensive analysis of NTNR management and economic growth opportunities will be prepared by the end of August 2001. The report will serve to guide the next set of Project investments in the NTNR pilot areas, and address issues at local, regional, and national levels.

CRP 3b *Ecotourism*

This sub-result has successfully completed its third phase – the development of pilot area action plans.

The two local initiative groups have been formed, and are meeting and working regularly.

The **Rila NP /Samokov** initiative group consists of a core team of **12 people** (B&B and restaurant keepers, transportation services, computer center, mountain guide service providers, horse riding club, craftsmen association, teachers, local municipality) and involves **10 additional** people working as of different task forces formed by the initiative group.

Central Balkan/Kalofer initiative group consists of core team of **9 people** (B&B and restaurant keepers, transportation services, mountain guide service providers, horse riding club, craftsmen association, cultural heritage center, local municipality) and **full membership of 25** people working in the different task forces.

Between May – July, **each of the initiative groups conducted 8 working meetings / workshops**. These meetings were devoted to the following steps in the development and implementation of the strategies and action plans of the initiative groups:

1. identification of opportunities for Ecotourism partnerships between the National park and the local businesses,
2. vision session and action planning,
3. ecotourism product development,
4. business planning,
5. information collection,
6. planning and design of a pilot area catalytic event,
7. PR strategy for the event.

The initiative groups conducted **two public events in each pilot area focal community**, to inform and attract the attention and support of the local communities in May and June. These events were widely advertised by posters and the local media. The public presentations enjoyed the participation of local government representatives, local educational and cultural institutions, NGOs, schools, businesses, media. Press coverage was reflected in the local media. The result of these public presentations was the significant increase in size and commitment of each initiative group.

The work of the initiative groups continues to be supported by the Project's professional facilitator and ecotourism planning expert, Nelly Georgieva (intermittent consultant). She works with each of the groups to facilitate the most significant step in local ecotourism strategic planning and implementation. Nelly will continue to assist each group with issues related to their long-term functions, issues of registration and formalization, and skills development. Each of these issues will form content for Project and Park support during the 2001/2002 winter season.

International ecotourism consultant Prof. Donald Hawkins visited the country and worked with the two pilot initiative groups and on the national level, in May 2001. With the assistance of the BCEG PMU and the intermittent consultant, N. Georgieva, he conducted a visioning/ planning workshop with each of the initiative groups. The workshop was designed as an interactive training session and resulted in an action plan for each of the pilot areas.

Professor Hawkins assisted with the development of a core concept of a future operational model for Park, ecotourism, and economic growth activities. The model was a result of intensive discussions, and local and national assessments of the ecotourism options and opportunities. The BCEG/National Park model focuses on:

- ✓ Development of Protected Areas Ecotourism Cluster
- ✓ Initiative for Ecotourism Incubator Process

The Pilot program received a second round of technical input when Professor Hawkins returned to supervise a group of **12 MBA / MTA technical team** from The George Washington University School of Tourism.

Each of the pilot areas hosted 6 consultants. The technical team worked with the task forces of each initiative group, to develop:

- business plans,
- promotional and marketing materials,
- design and plans for events and,
- identify park attractions.

George Washington University technical teams left each local initiative group with sets of useful drafts of materials for their future work. In addition, the Project hosted a series of product development workshops, assisted by Professor Hawkins and the GWU Technical Team. These workshops set the stage for the preliminary development of individual business plans for select entrepreneurs within each of the initiative groups.

“Brokering” initiatives – Professor Hawkins joined the BCEG PMU, to broker investment opportunities within the Sofia financial and donor community. A series of meetings were conducted with USAID programs and other donors/organizations, to investigate the opportunities to attract investments interest.

The most tangible result of this effort to date, was the proposal and approval of funds to rehabilitate a building in Kalofer to become an information/ visitors center for Central Balkan National park. 18 000 Lev are provided by the Government of Bulgaria (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) within the framework of Beautiful Bulgaria Project, a UNDP initiative.

The **National Ecotourism Working Group** conducted **2 meetings** during this period. The members of the working group engaged in a review of project activities to date, and began to develop a working memorandum that would guide a longer-term relationship between the Ministry of Environment and Water and The Tourism Department of the Ministry of Economy.

Three (3) **presentations to USAID and stakeholders** were conducted during the reporting period. The first one was devoted to the concept for the future development of protected areas based ecotourism in the country. It was attended by the USAID program department in Bulgaria and representatives of programs and contractors of USAID in Bulgaria. The second presentation was for a wider public and included the participation of the representatives of the National Parks the initiative groups, members of the tourism business community at national level, government agencies and USAID. The public presentation on Ecotourism Models for Protected Areas - Case studies from Rila and Central Balkan National Parks was delivered in a PowerPoint presentation at the USIS, in Sofia, on June 15. The presentation was greatly assisted in its organization by the USAID Environment Specialist. The presentation was the final product of the GW University Technical Team, and focused on action plans, opportunities for using the concepts of Ecotourism clusters and Business Incubators.

This presentation was refined and presented at a Brown Bag, to a USAID audience in Washington DC, on June 28, 2001, by Professor Hawkins and select members of the GW University Technical Team. Organization of this meeting was facilitated by the Project's CTO.

There are a number of products resulting from this phase of the pilot project's development:

- ✓ Ecotourism Development Guidebook
- ✓ National Parks focused Ecotourism – Approaches, Opportunities, and Strategy – Consultant Report of Prof. Donald Hawkins
- ✓ Ecotourism & Gateway Communities - Rila & Central Balkan National Parks – GW University Technical Team Consultants report
- ✓ Regular reports of the working meetings of the local initiative groups.

Work Plan Implications

The next steps within the two initiative groups are the preparation and offering of two “catalytic” events planned for September and October 2001. These events serve three purposes:

1. to consolidate the roles and commitments of the initiative group members in the focused preparation of a publicity and launching events;
2. draw the attention and participation of public and private sector participants to the gateway role that each community plays for National Parks;
3. to celebrate the installation of new Park tourism and visitor management infrastructure and information,.

In the case of Central Balkan National Park, the event will coincide with the Park's 10th Anniversary Celebration.

International Consultant - The next international consultants mission is planned for September and will aim the development of the Ecotourism Competitive Cluster Concept, the next steps of the business planning effort and the SMART INFO (National tourist Information System at the Ministry of Economy) and assist BCEG and potential partners (FLAG, MSI) to plan and design training programs.

Study Tour - A group of 12 people from the initiative groups in each pilot area, will participate in a study tour in November (3-17) to Washington, DC and Tennessee. They are recipients of a USAID - TRANSIT grant, awarded earlier this year. The Project will assist each Study Tour team to orient and prepare most effectively for their role during the study tour, and especially focus on their activities when returning to Bulgaria.

Preparation of the market research study has started and it will be one of the important focuses during the next phase of the project. Market research activities at national level, and in the two park ecotourism pilot areas, will commence in September and October of this next reporting period.

Protected Area Ecotourism Cluster – the groundwork is being laid for the development and launching of the PA Ecotourism Cluster. The Cluster will be used to represent national park ecotourism issues at national level, and to begin planning for next year's preeminent public awareness event and symposium on tourism, parks and mountains.

CRP 4 Mechanism for National Park Financial Sustainability Established

There were several accomplishments noted during this reporting period:

1. Concessions

The most significant recommendation to final approval of the National Park Management Plans for Rila and Central Balkan was the addition of a clause allowing Park's to employ the concessions act in managing property and resources on state property. This clause removes one of the serious impediments to protected area territorial management and revenue generation. This was achieved through substantial discussion on informal levels with members of the legal office of the Council of Ministers.

The BCEG Project PMU expects to target specific project activities in ecotourism and possibly in NTNR management that employ the use of concessions. While there is little precedent in using this tool for protected areas in Bulgaria, there is some experience in using concessions as tools in mineral resources exploitation and water resources management.

2. National Task Force

Several attempts to establish a national task force were unsuccessful due to the focus on national elections, and the appointment of ministers and deputy ministers within all Ministries. While this should not affect the composition of parts of the task force, several key civil servants within the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Environment and Waters are not expected to retain their roles and/or responsibilities.

September and October will present a better opportunity to (re) constitute the national task force, and to better effect.

3. Private Sector Sponsorship

Private sector sponsorship is one element of the Ecotourism pilot program. Sponsorship is being sought for each of the major catalytic events in the Park's ecotourism pilot sites. Sponsorship proposals are being designed and developed in August, with the assistance of the BCEG Project. Each initiative group anticipates at least several commercial sponsors of their events in October.

Additional private sector sponsorship partnerships and proposal development will be part of each Park's capacity building programs starting in November.

4. Venture Capital Fund

The use of the venture capital fund received a boost during the May, early June visit of the Natural Resources Policy Specialist. The concept of using a venture capital fund to generate money for national parks was examined. A draft request for proposal (RFP) format is being developed, and will be reviewed by the Ministry of Environment and Waters, National Parks Directorates, and the Enterprise Development Specialist, in October. The aim is to solicit proposals from the private sector that contain a profit-sharing scheme with national parks. A competitive bidding process is proposed to solicit innovation and creativity in development, sales, and distribution of park promotion and information materials, using the venture capital

fund. Successful tenders will include a proposal for a profit sharing scheme, in lieu of repayment of what might be considered a loan. Since the venture capital amount is not significant, the Project will determine the value of sharing this fund between parks and local entrepreneurs, leaving it as lump sum, or seeking additional capital support from other donor projects, such as the BSBCP, and/or the Ecotrust, or National Environmental Protection Fund.

Final RFP design is expected to be completed in this next reporting period, and will include recommendations for a national review committee, schedule of events, capitalization scheme, and competitive tender procedures.

5. Funding Windows in the National Environmental Protection Fund

This activity awaits formation of the new government, and awaits the “settling-in” of the new Minister and her deputies. We have also been led to believe that the new Environment Protection Act will be reviewed and tabled to the appropriate parliamentary commission within the next reporting period. The framework law could provide still provide an important context for financial mechanisms in Bulgaria, as well as improve the operation and application of the National Environmental Protection Fund in support of biodiversity conservation.

The PMU is awaiting an indication from UNDP that they will proceed with the GEF enabling activities in support of financial mechanisms and incentives for biodiversity conservation outside of protected areas. This study was designed with the UNDP to complement the financial mechanisms being examined for use in the country’s protected area system.

Work Plan Implications *None*

Result 3 Greater Public Awareness and Participation is demonstrated in protected area management

CRP	Activity	May-July			August-Oct			Nov –Jan 2002			Feb-April		
6	Public Awareness												
	National Press Campaigns												
	▪ Market study (national)				x	x							
	▪ Newspaper supplements on tourism and ecotourism											x	x
	▪ PA Laws preparation				x			x	x	x	x		
	Public Information Access												
	▪ Multi-media CD					x	x						
	▪ National Parks Website								x		x		
	Green Media												
	▪ Green Journalist Club meetings			x			x			x			x
	▪ Feature Articles			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	▪ Media Monitoring	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	▪ Opinion Makers event							x					
	Decision Makers												
	▪ Decision Makers event at Parliament							x					
	▪ Decision makers field trips						x						x

CRP 6 Public Awareness Campaign Implemented

6.1 Public Awareness Strategy – Phase 2

The Public Awareness working group completed its Phase 2 public awareness strategy during this reporting period. The Phase 2 strategy draws on the lessons learned and messages developed in support of the (a) Green Gold Launch campaign; (b) the public hearings and information campaign surrounding the final phases of the management plan approval process for both national parks.

Phase 2 focuses much more on the messages being developed by the Park's pilot programs in eco-enterprise, implementation of management plans, better Bulgarian public access to biodiversity conservation information, mass media and commercial sponsor links, and more readily accessible international public awareness tools.

6.2 Clearing House Mechanisms

During the January-May period, 2001, the BCEG Project coordinated its efforts with UNDP and the Regional Environment Center (REC) in Budapest for organizing a workshop on a National Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism, hosted by REC.

The BCEG Project supported the conduct of a needs assessment that would help to shape the steps necessary for developing a CHM within the MOEW. The Needs Assessment was completed in May of 2001, and served to guide the discussions on the design and the agenda of the Workshop.

The three partners formed a Steering Committee to guide the Workshop design. Four meetings of the Committee were held. The BCEG Project hosted two of them. The Project's Public Awareness specialist took active part in developing the Workshop design and agenda, developed a Press Release, and ensure its dissemination.

The Workshop took place in Bankya Palace Hotel, on May 21-23, 2001. 23 representatives of the NGOs, national and nature parks, governmental and scientific institutions took part in it.

The objective of the Workshop was to initiate the process of the establishment of a national Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) for the biodiversity and its protection. Its aims were:

- To discuss and clarify the legal aspects.
- To present the results and analysis of the needs assessment.
- To present the European Union's and the Slovak Republic's experiences in the establishment of CHM.
- To initiate a dialogue for and start the process of reaching agreement of all the Bulgarian stakeholders in the field of the biodiversity protection in concern with the CHM.
- To analyse the problems linked to the information to be circulated through the Clearing House mechanism – sources, owners, reliability of the information, etc.

Main Results of the Workshop: Participants at the Workshop concluded that:

- Needs and problems associated with information collection, storage and sharing were identified
- Further develop and improve a directory of the sources, types, forms and access issues associated with biodiversity in Bulgaria.
- Need to categorize and systematically organize biodiversity information;
- Need to transform the information into a form that allows for multiple exchange, access to large volumes of information and quick speed of the access;
- Need of specialized bodies to facilitate the information exchange;
- The State (MOEW/NNPS) should remain a major player in the process
- CHM development efforts need to be better coordinated with the State Agency on the Environment;

The Workshop resolved that:

- ❑ Exchange of up-dated information, clarification on institutional roles, and recommendations would be made between the workshop participants and REC (until June 06th, 2001)
- ❑ The REC would support development of a web-page that would launch public access to select pieces of national biodiversity conservation information;
- ❑ Development of a national CHM working group – terms of reference and modes of working;
- ❑ Dissemination of the results of this workshop and copies of the BCEG supported Needs Assessment, among wide range of potential participants to the CHM.

UNDP continues to examine the capacity building needs of the MOEW to provide a CHM in both a national and international context. A UNDP international consultant - Mr. William Booth, has given his recommendations for the next needed steps in his report. A draft copy of his report is available to USAID, as required.

Booth has recommended that ARD provide expert assistance to UNDP with the design and implementation of a CHM in Bulgaria. This is not considered part of the BCEG Project brief, and so ARD has forwarded a resume and corporate capabilities profile for IT and MIS to Daphina Gercheva, at UNDP.

6.3 Monthly press monitoring reports

A monthly press monitoring system has been employed using new criteria, formats and analysis. This tool serves to evaluate mass media coverage on national biodiversity conservation messages, and ratio of the number that are supported by the BCEG Project. The report is provided in English and Bulgarian each month.

Specifically, the reports contain:

- a list of monitored publications;
- the number of all articles concerning environmental issues published in the central press and the number of articles by topics;
- the number, titles and a detailed description of the articles provoked by the Project
- number of articles concerning the priority themes of the project;
- a comparison of the number of articles published during the following month in comparison with the previous one, and;
- the number of the articles on the Projects priority themes in comparison with the other environmental issues.

6.4 Rila Monastery NP Management Plan

Press Conference

Press conference announcing the start of the Rila Monastery Management Plan preparation was held on 11 June 2001 in the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA).

Invitations were sent to the all (200) subscribers of the BTA. 14 journalists from the central media participated. (The list of participants together with the Press Release, Fact Sheet and the text of the paid article disseminated through the BTA, are available as Appendix 2).

As a result of the Press Conference, 12 articles were published in the central press and three TV and radio reports disseminated (which is 21% of the number of all (57) articles concerning nature protection issues published in the central press in June). All the articles and broadcasts were accurate, informative, and in keeping with the messages delivered.

Meetings with stakeholder representatives

These meetings were conducted in conjunction with Rila Monastery Management Plan, CPT members. Each was designed to provide maximum follow-up to the launch workshop, and to better profile the information and awareness needs of each organization.

6 July, with:

- Viktor Kondov and Ivanka Stoianova - Institute of Cultural Monuments
- Katia Rakovska - NGOS -Balkani, to better determine how to approach building NGO consensus

9 July, with:

- Dimitar Sekulov Holy Synod in Sofia

16 July, with:

- ❖ Mr. Dachev, Head of Regional Forestry Department in Kyustendil
- ❖ Mr. Gencho Georgiev, Head of Regional Road Administration in Dupnitsa
- ❖ Mr. Kiril Botsev, Head of Hunting and Fishing Association, Dupnitsa,
- ❖ Mr. Vassil Vladimirov, Secretary of Rilski Ezera Tourist Association, Dupnitsa

17 July, with:

- Mr. Dimitar Chalashkanov, Mayor of Rila town
- Mr. Dimitar Dimitrov, Director of Rila Monastery State Forestry, Rila town
- Ms. Vanya Hristova, Mayor of Padala village
- Mr. Stoyne Mihailov, Mayor of Pastra village

18 July, with:

- Mr. Kostadin Katin, Mayor of Kocherinovo village
- Krassimir Bozhkov, Director of the Blagoevgrad Section of Dams and Cascades

Public Awareness and Information Materials

As a consequence of these follow-up visits with stakeholders, a series of postcards were developed as part of the Management Planning and its first public awareness materials. The post cards contain images from the Park and messages about the conservation values, management planning effort, and management planning objectives. These post cards will be used during the process of socio-economic information collection and as information and public awareness materials during the Management Plan preparation, and again as part of public hearings in advance of the final management plan review.

6.5 Work with the “Green Media Machine”

The first Quarterly Meeting with the Club of “Green Journalists” was held on 31 July 2001. Journalists from all Central Media covering environmental issues were invited.

The agenda of the meeting:

- Present the Projects Public Awareness activities and the Public Awareness Strategy
- News from the Parks: Park Management Plan Implementation – Special Projects, Parks Anniversaries, Tourist infrastructure.
- Discussion about the opportunities for in-depth reporting provoked and supported from the Project.

18 journalists from the central media took part in the meeting. Nine of them were ones with whom the Project has been working for years and nine of them were new.

The journalists expressed a positive attitude towards the themes and the approach of the Project and made some recommendations and proposals. Specific recommendations and actions are available in the minutes from this meeting. Specific journalists are beginning to offer their services for specific BCEG/Park Project themes.

6.6 Multi-media Presentation Concept Paper

The concept paper for a multi-media CD was completed. The content and purpose of the CD was discussed and reviewed with the Project's intermittent media and marketing consultant, Plamen Vulchev, and with the Swiss Program representative of the Pirin Project, as well as the Working Group, and national parks directorate staff.

6.7 Conservation Education Curriculum

As a result of the conservation education curriculum support materials implemented under the GEF Project educational program, GEF Project conservation education consultant, Mrs. Lilly Vladova and her team put together a project proposal for an Nature Protection Educational Information Center. The BCEG Project reviewed this proposal before submission. The Project is designed to serve all the teachers in the country. It is supposed to generate and disseminate information, experience and materials specifically addressing conservation education with a biodiversity and protected areas conservation approach. The Project is expecting financing from the National Environmental Protection Fund.

6.8 Provoked Articles

Two feature-length articles were produced by Velin Yavorski, an editor from the Bulgarian Army newspaper, with Project support. The first article, an interview with Mimi Pramatarova, Director of Rila National Park, is designed to focus on the profession of nature protection and park management. It will be published in the weekly with large circulation "A newspaper for Women". The second article, – a report about the rangers and law enforcement, is written and will be published in August. Both articles are designed to promote the image and responsibilities of a new park management labor force.

6.9 Parks Public Awareness Strategies

The Project's Public Awareness specialist, Svetlana Aladjem, spent several days in each Park Directorate, working primarily with each Directorates, PR experts. As a result, each Directorate has asked for support to review and revise their Park Public Awareness strategy. This effort will form a focus for technical support during the next reporting period. The results of the strategy will be reflected in each Park's next Annual Operation Plan.

Work Plan Implications

The concept, script, and multi-media production company for the Multimedia CD on Bulgarian National Parks, is expected to be completed. Production will be delayed until the end of the year.

In addition, the orientation and specific schedule for new parliamentarians and Environment Commission members is expected to be implemented during this next quarter. Delays in this effort may arise from the schedule of activities confronting Parliament, and the new

leadership of the Ministry. Still the Project will attempt to link one of both of the Park pilot ecotourism and birthday celebrations to this decision maker field trip.

The content, outline, and graphic presentation for the Rila Monastery Nature Park Pamphlet will be completed during this same reporting period.

Additional mass media articles will be defined, developed, and supported by the Project, on a monthly basis, as planned.

4.0 Project Management and Administration

4.1 Project Coordination and Supervision

In addition to BCEG Project coordination activities noted in the bulk of this report, BCEG Project Team Leader, Peter Hetz, participated in a review of the GEF Project activities and stakeholders for the Rhodopes Biodiversity Conservation Project design. The first working meeting on June 14, was also attended by Jay Lee, USAID-Bulgaria Environmental Officer.

The BCEG Project Team Leader and CPT Coordinator, Petar Yankov, were participants at a three-day seminar on harmonization of Bulgarian environmental legislation with EU legislation and directives. The Seminar was June 18-20, 2001.

4.2 Project Staffing

No changes to Project national staff are noted.

4.3 Office

The BCEG Project office space was modified to include a small working room for the Rila Monastery Nature Park- Core Planning Team, and a part-time administrative assistant and translator

4.4 International Technical Assistance

Dr. Steve Dennison, was approved as key personnel to the BCEG Project under the functional labor category for Environmental Policy Specialist. Dr. Dennison completed 21 days of his LOE of 60 days. Dr. Dennison's assignment was from May 11-30, 2001.

Professor Donald Hawkins, was approved as key personnel to the BCEG Project under the functional labor category for Ecotourism Specialist. Dr. Hawkins completed 10 days of his LOE of 54 days in May, (14-23) 2001.

Mr. Jared Hardner, was approved as key personnel to the BCEG Project under the functional labor category for Business Development Specialist during this reporting period. Mr. Hardner will provide 14 days of consulting services in August of 2001. This will leave a balance of 46 days of his total LOE of 60 days.

4.5 National Technical Assistance

- *Rila Monastery Nature Park* - Core Planning Team Members (4) – Yankov, Peev, Velichkov, and Kostadinova, were placed on intermittent consulting contracts from the end of April.
- *Media and Marketing Specialist* – Plamen Vulchev, was placed on an intermittent consultant contract.
- *Ecotourism Intermittent consultant* – Dochka Filipova joined the GW University Technical Team for 10 days of their assignment in Samokov.

4.6 Purchase Orders

The following professional services contracts (purchase orders) were issued in favor of

1. GEOHIDE Project – to rectify and transform the coordinate system for Rila Monastery Nature Park.
2. Kiril Runtov Ltd. two contracts for visitor management and information infrastructure, and tourism facilities, Rila National Park.
3. Bulgarian Geo-information Company – GPS training course;
4. Institute of Botany – Rapid Ecological Assessment – Rila Monastery Nature Park – Botany team;
5. Institute of Zoology – Rapid Ecological Assessment – Rila Monastery Nature Park – Zoology – invertebrates;
6. National Natural History Museum – Rapid Ecological Assessment – Rila Monastery Nature Park – vertebrates;
7. Institute of Botany – Non-Timber Resource Assessment – Rila and Central Balkan National Parks – Blueberries (*Vaccinium sp.*) and Pilot Areas.
8. Analytical Creative Group, Ltd. Preparation and Implementation of a Rapid Cultural, Tourist, and Socio-Economic Assessment – Rila Monastery Nature Park.
9. DÁRT Ltd. – Printing and publication of Rila and Central Balkan Management Plans;
10. Amendments to the Rila National Park and Central Balkan National Park Design and Contract Supervision purchase orders of 2000.

4.7 International Training and Workshop Events - None

4.8 International Travel - None

4.9 Networking and Partnerships

4.9.1 BSBCP - Swiss Program – no meetings, activities, and/or discussions of note here. The BSBCP will celebrate their third programming phase on September 1, 2001.

4.9.2 UNDP – noted above. Close collaboration continues on:

- *Rhodopes GEF Biodiversity Conservation Project*
- *Biodiversity Conservation Financial Mechanisms*
- *Clearing House Mechanism*

4.9.3 PC-3 Telecenter Project – One award of this project results in benefits to one of the national parks – Central Balkan and their community of Aprilsti.

4.9.4 World Bank – Nutrient Reduction and Wetland Restoration Project Preparation. With the encouragement of USAID, the World Bank National PPUnit and Bank team met with the BCEG Project to solicit ideas for pre-feasibility assessments on community income generation and enterprise development activities at the two pilot sites along the Danube. The discussions resulted in the Bank approaching ARD-USA to supply an international ARD consultant to lead a three-person team for a pre-feasibility assessment in the pilot area. The team will conduct a series of activities modeled on the aspects of the BCEG Project eco-enterprise pilots. The field work will be conducted in August and September, independent of the BCEG Project.

APPENDICES

**List of Rila and Central Balkan National Park Projects
Supported by the BCEG Project - 2001 - 2002**

Park	Pr. No	Park Plan Ref. No	Project title	Planned by NPD	PMU supervisor	Park Counterpart
Rila	1.	3.1	Tourist Picnic Areas	13000	Kamelia Georgieva	Todor Serezliiski
Rila	2.	3.2	Park Entrance Points	50000	Kamelia Georgieva	Todor Serezliiski
Rila	3.	3.3/4/6	Visitors Management Signage	16000	Kamelia Georgieva	Todor Serezliiski
Rila	4.	4.3	Replications of Nature Protection Films	1000	Svetla Aladjem	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	5.	4.5	Information Bulletin	2000	Svetla Aladjem	Tanya/Stefan Kirilov
Rila	6.	4.11/27; 5.4.1/2	Interpretation and Education Facilities (Samokov)	16000	Kamelia Georgieva	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	7.	4.13	'Rila NP – Known and Unknown' Environmental Education Set	3000	Svetla Aladjem	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	8.	4.14.16	Seven Lakes Trail Guide	300	Svetla Aladjem	Strahil Gyuviiski
Rila	9.	4.18	Rila NP Guide	7000	Kamelia Georgieva	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	10.	4.22	Visitor Information and Safety Materials	4700	Svetla Aladjem	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	11.	4.26	Rila NP Leaflet	7000	Svetla Aladjem	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	12.	5.5.1	Waste Management Campaign	1000	Kamelia Georgieva	Stefan Kirilov
Rila	13.	5.5.3	Waste Water Treatment and Management	2000	Kamelia Georgieva	Todor Serezliiski
CB	1.	1.2	Visitor Center – Tuzha Chalet	5000	Kamelia Georgieva	Damyan Pamukchiev
CB	2.	1.3	GIS Development	20000	Dimitrina Boteva	Gencho Iliev
CB	3.	1.4	Medicinal Plants Section to the Management Plan	6000	Dimitrina Boteva	Gergana Terzieva
CB	4.	4.2/4	Visitor Management Infrastructure in Kalofer Pilot Area	9200	Kamelia Georgieva	Petya Kovacheva
CB	5.	4.4	Tourist Management and Interpretation Infrastructure	26430	Kamelia Georgieva	Petya Kovacheva
CB	6.	4.4	Signboards Outside the Park	10000	Kamelia Georgieva	Petya Kovacheva
CB	7.	5.1	Park as a Classroom Site	2500	Kamelia Georgieva	Diana Terzieva
CB	8.	5.2	Archeological Research	3000	Kamelia Georgieva	Diana Terzieva
CB	9.	5.3	Training of Teachers	4000	Svetla Aladjem	Diana Terzieva
CB	10.	5.4	Park Trail Guide	8000	Kamelia Georgieva	Petya Kovacheva
CB	11.	5.7	Portable Exposition – CBNP Fauna	2200	Svetla Aladjem	Anton Stanchev
CB	12.	5.8.1/2	Post Card Set	4000	Svetla Aladjem	Diana Terzieva
CB	13.	5.10	Training of Journalists	2250	Svetla Aladjem	Diana Terzieva
CB	14.	5.11	Multimedia Presentation of the NP	4300	Svetla Aladjem	Petya/Gencho Iliev
CB	15.	7.4	Visitor Information Hall at Kozya Stena Chalet	1850	Svetla Aladjem	Diana Terzieva
CB	16.	MP 5.1.1	Marking of the Reserve Boundaries	8700	Kamelia Georgieva	Damyan Pamukchiev

Proposal Format for National Park Management Plan Implementation

1. Title of Project
2. Name and title of responsible person
3. Total amount requested
- 3.a Annual Plan/Management Plan reference
4. Expected Results/Outputs – stated in terms of numbers of people trained, signs installed, and/or trails built
5. Endorsements or approvals needed and or attached to proposal
6. Overall strategy – will this project be carried out by Park staff, community volunteers, specialists hired from outside (consultants). In other words, how will this Project be completed?
7. Activities (Describe who will do what, how, and by when. Use a brief format that can be presented in a chart).
8. Detailed budget – if you are costing per diems, consultant times, etc, we need to know how many days, and at what rates.
9. Park contributions – staff time, office use, communication, etc. Specify how many staff, for how long, and give an approximate cost – such as salary, or in-kind contributions.
10. EIA considerations – is this project expected to have any environmental impacts? If so, how will they be mitigated? What measures will you take to ensure that there is no loss to the environmental quality of the site/location.
11. Endorsements/Approval by the NNPS/Park Directors, as necessary.

Procedures for the National Park Projects

A. The Role of the National Park

1. Propose the project following the approved format
2. Prepare the payment schedule
3. Request payments at least three days in advance and submit the respective contractual documents or conditions in order to receive the next payment
4. Provide the needed approvals by MOEW or other institutions
5. Ensure entirely the coordination and all relations with the contractors

B. ARD Role

1. Each project shall be supervised by one ARD expert staff member. Peter Hetz shall take part in all decisions
2. Approve the projects and budgets, as well as their management scheme
3. Final review and approval of the design of constructions and printed materials
4. Final review and approval of the text of publications and signboards
5. Considerations regarding the environmental appropriateness
6. Gets involved in the relations with the contractors only when extremely necessary

August 2001

Appendix 2

Materials from the Rila Monastery Nature Park Management Plan Press Conference

Bulgarian Telegraph Agency**Press club*****Press conference of ARD Bulgaria BCEG Project******11.06.2001******Journalists who participated the press conference***

Name	Edition, Program, Media
Tsanka Misheva	National radio, Hristo Botev radio program
Dolores Vitanova	Democracy newspaper
Dessislava Veleva	Duma newspaper
Slaviana Manolova	Weekly Trud newspaper
Roumiana Michova	Bulgarian Telegraphy Agency
Lev Kokushkin	Pari + newspaper
Velin Iavorski	Bulgarian army newspaper
Roumiana Tsvetkova	Bulgarian National Radio, Radio Bulgaria
Dana Beleva	Bulgarian National Radio, Horizon
Stoyan Nenov	Bulgarian army newspaper
Deliana Petkova	Vereia TV
Valentin Georgiev	Pari Newspaper
Paulina Jordanova	Earth newspaper
Victor Ivanov	24 hours newspaper

On June 11, 2001, the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA) hosted a press conference by the team of the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project implemented by ARD Bulgaria. The press conference marked the start of the process of developing a Management Plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park. All central as well as local media were invited. The Project team introduced the core planning team commissioned by ARD to develop the Management Plan; it also presented the planning methodology and the main phases and steps in the process, which is to be carried out in coordination with all stakeholders.

The attending journalists were presented with information materials regarding Rila Monastery Nature Park and the planning process, and shown a map of the Park. They were familiarized with the information channels that would be made available to the media in the course of the planning process and the adoption of the Management Plan.

The press conference was attended by 15 representatives of the central media. The information shared with them was subsequently circulated through BTA channels to some 200 central and local corporate subscribers.

The press conference has since resulted in the publication of 16 news stories and articles in the central press; two TV and four radio broadcasts on national networks. Transcripts of these, as well as of any other related publications to appear in the future, will be stored at the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project HQ.

Following are copies of the information materials handed out at the press conference and distributed among all BTA subscribers.

ARD Bulgaria
**Biodiversity Conservation &
Economic Growth
Project**

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**PRESS RELEASE
June 11**

**The Countdown to Adopting a
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR RILA MONASTERY NATURE PARK
Has Begun**

In late June 2001 the Core Planning Team responsible for preparing a Management Plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park is organizing a workshop that is to launch the process of preparation of the Plan. The workshop is to present the goals and objectives of the project, its Frame of Reference, the team to be involved in it and the planning process. A Joint Stakeholders' Group is to be created that will include representatives of all bodies and institutions with a vested interest in that territory; the Group will participate in formulating management decisions pertaining to future activities and investments in the Park. The Launching Workshop is an important first step towards defining the composition and commitments of the Stakeholders' Group. It will be attended by representatives of the Ministries of the Environment and Waters, Agriculture and Forestry; of the Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Rila Monastery; of the Institute of Monuments of Culture; of the regional and local authorities, of NGOs and environmental watchdog organizations, etc.

The Protected Areas Act (PAA), adopted in 1999, has defined a management plan as the core mechanism for the management of territories placed under special protection; such areas may include diverse ecosystems and habitats of various plant and animal species; unique or characteristic landscapes, as well as abiotic natural formations. The preparation of management plans for such protected areas is governed by a Regulation appended to the Protected Areas Act.

Pursuant to the Amendment (March 2000) to the Protected Areas Act, an area of 27,370.7 hectares originally falling within Rila National Park has been re-categorized into **Rila Monastery Nature Park**. Under the relevant PAA provisions, a management plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park must be completed within three years of the declaration of the protected area.

The Ministry of the Environment and Waters (MOEW) has entrusted the preparation of the Management Plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park to the Biodiversity Conservation & Economic Growth Project funded by the United States Agency for International Development and executed by the Contractor, ARD Bulgaria. The planning process is to begin in compliance with a Frame of Reference approved by the Minister of the Environment and Waters in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, in March 2001. The planning phase will begin in October 2001 after a period of intensive field data gathering during the summer.

ARD is a consultancy with over 20 years of worldwide experience in biodiversity conservation and management of protected areas. It has supervised or overseen the preparation and adoption of over 40 management plans in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the USA. In fulfillment of the GEF Project for Biodiversity Conservation, also funded by USAID, ARD has supervised the development of Management Plans for the two largest national parks in Bulgaria: Rila and Central Balkan. The Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project is a joint initiative of the governments of Bulgaria and the USA and is being implemented pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments, one of the objectives of which is the development of a Management Plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park.

For more information, please contact Ms. Svetlana Aladjem, phone ##: 980-3686; 986-3846; 980-7240 or 986-7418.

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Rila Monastery Nature Park

Located in the Rila Mountain some 100 kilometers south of the capital, Sofia, the Rila Monastery Nature Park has a total area of 27,370.7 hectares, of which 14,370.7 hectares are forests and the remaining 13,000 hectares, alpine meadows and pastures. It falls in part within the territory of Rila Municipality, Kyustendil Region, and covers the lands of Rila monastery and the village of Padala. The Park is surrounded on three sides, to the north, east and south, by Rila National Park, with which it shares a common border of more than 60 kilometers.

Pursuant to Art. 52 of the Protected Areas Act, Nature Parks are managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF) and its regional bodies. To that end, a Park Directorate has been set up as a regional body of MOAF, based in the town of Rila, to manage the Park.

Rila Monastery Nature Park is characterized by its unique natural scenery defined by the steep slopes along the Rilska and Iliyna river valleys, the glacial gorge of the Rilska river, the Ribny Ezera kettlehole, the moraines and rockslides formed as a result of post-glacial sublimation. A particularly scenic site is the area around Kirilova Polyana meadow with its bow-shaped rock face and the Zliya Zab (Evil Tooth) cliff cluster. The alpine zone and the zone of Malyovitza and Orlovetz, where Rila Monastery Nature Park borders on Rila National Park, has a scientifically established abundance of rare and endangered plant and animal species. A significant number of species of national and worldwide conservation significance have also been discovered around the Mramoretz kettlehole.

Another territory of particular significance featuring a large number of rare and protected plant and animal species is the mountain ridge separating the Iliyna and Rilska river valleys, notably the area around the Ribny Ezera lakes. It also serves as a natural link between the Rila Monastery Forest Reserve and the Central Rila Reserve (the latter being part of Rila National Park). The limestone formations around the Ribny Ezera kettlehole are unique to Rila Mountain.

In the northern section of Rila Monastery Nature Park lies the **Rila Monastery Forest Reserve** covering an area of 3,676.5 hectares. It comprises the alpine zone and wooded massifs on both sides of the Rilska river, as well as the north-western slopes along the Iliyna river valley. The Reserve features natural ecosystems of coniferous, deciduous and mixed (beech and fir) forests, nearly 95 per cent of the trees in which are naturally grown. The average age of trees for the entire Reserve is ca. 160 years, while on some 800 hectares, or about 30 per cent of its territory, it reaches 220 years. The Rila Monastery Forest Reserve boasts some unique communities of Rila oak, a species endemic to this territory, as well as of a range of other rare or endangered plant and animal species. The Reserve is also one of only two recorded sites worldwide known as home of the Rila rhubarb.

The centuries-old forests and the looming mountain slopes provide a majestic backdrop to Rila Monastery, an historical and architectural reserve of international stature, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For more than five centuries the Monastery has been a treasure-trove of cultural and religious artifacts of inestimable significance to the Bulgarian nation. Close by is the Tomb of St. John of Rila, a major site of religious worship.

This combination of Eastern Orthodox religious significance and the unique natural scenery makes the Rila Monastery Nature Park and the Monastery itself a prime tourist attraction for Bulgarian as well as international visitors. More than a quarter of a million tourists visit the Park every year using the only access road via the townships of Kocherinovo, Rila and Pastra. This significant tourist flow provides an opportunity to develop ecological, cultural and religious tourism as a major source of livelihood to the local population.